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Celano's Naples Itineraries through a Material City (1692)

Joris van Gastel

'[T]he city', writes the Italian novelist Italo Calvino in his *Città invisibili* (1972), 'does not speak its past – it contains it as the lines of a hand, written in the edges of the streets, in the gratings of the windows, in the banisters of the steps, in the antennas of the lightning rods, in the poles of the flags, every segment, in turn, marked with scratches, indentations, cuts and flourishes'.¹ Thus, we become aware that the city is not only a plan, a space, a network, but also matter: the stones that pave the streets, the plaster that covers the walls, the iron grates protecting the windows, the asphalt that covers the motor ways – all are inscribed by history, and indeed, have a history themselves. The material aspects of urban space have, particularly in the wake of Henri Lefebvre's *La production de l'espace* (1974), received serious scholarly attention. A typical way of dealing with this materiality can be found, to pick just one example, in Lars Frers' and Lars Meiers' *Encountering Urban Places* of 2007:

Encountering the place, one feels and interacts with the power that is molded into the concrete materiality. In the place, the pavement guides the walker, the closed door stops the movement, and the uncomfortable bench discomforts the one who tries to rest. Materiality is more than the dead product of human labor and culture, following Latour (1993), it is an active participant (or 'actant') in social relations.²

Notwithstanding this recognition of the role, indeed, the active role of the material fabric of the city – the reference is to Bruno Latour's actor-network theory – matter here remains abstract, devoid of qualities, as if the whole city is drawn up from colourless concrete.³ Its active role, moreover, is here understood as social, and as such, forecloses an exploration of its active role in the material itself.⁴

Early modern city guides give us a very different picture of the materials that make up the city. Even if itineraries might contain traces of the social agency of the fabric of the city as described by Frers and Meiers, authors of such guides appear to have been much more interested in the various materials themselves. One of the most striking examples of such an interest, at times verging on the obsessive, is

¹ I. Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, Torino, Einaudi, 1972, p. 18: 'Ma la città non dice il suo passato, lo contiene come le linee d'una mano, scritto negli spigoli delle vie, nelle griglie delle finestre, negli scorrimano delle scale, nelle antenne dei parafulmini, nelle aste delle bandiere, ogni segmento rigato a sua volta di graffi, seghettature, intagli, svirgole'.

² L. Frers, L. Meier, *Encountering Urban Places: Visual and Material Performances in the City*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, p. 2.

³ Cfr. B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. C. Porter, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 1993.

⁴ Cfr. L. Malafouris, C. Renfrew, 'The Cognitive Life of Things: Archaeology, Material Engagement and the Extended Mind', in: L. Malafouris, C. Renfrew (eds), *The Cognitive Life of Things: Recasting the Boundaries of the Mind*, Cambridge, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2010, p. 2.

without doubt Carlo Celano's (1617–1693) *Notitie del bello, dell'antico e del curioso della città di Napoli*, published in 1692.⁵ Characterized by Benedetto Croce as 'the broadest and most lively description of the city of Naples', it is often referred to by art historians, who mine it for dates and attributions. Indeed, Celano is an exceptionally trustworthy source for such information – we know, in fact, that he was on familiar terms with central figures of the Neapolitan baroque, such as Cosimo Fanzago and Luca Giordano.⁶ This paper, however, aims to give a different reading of Celano's text, a reading that has a special significance for the study of seventeenth-century Naples. While the richness of Naples' material culture, or, more specifically, the material richness of Naples' culture – Jakob Burckhardt spoke of the 'splendour-loving Naples'⁷ – has often been regarded in terms of conspicuous consumption, Celano helps us to develop a more nuanced account. This account, moreover, illustrates the central role materials may have in the construction of urban identity.

The Birds-Eye View

Celano starts out with a description of the city from what we may call a birds-eye view, considering it as a whole, indeed, almost as an organic entity, that, from its first foundation 'on the top of the mountain', was laid out in eleven subsequent steps, and crowned by the seventeenth-century *borghi* outside of the city walls.⁸ Its appearance is best seen from the sea, as in contemporary maps, from which it appears as a 'more than noble theatre'.⁹ Thus, the city rises from the sea as a monolith, an image that, at least at first, is confirmed when we learn about 'the site, size and quality of our Naples'. Celano writes:

the stone that [...] Naples has for its buildings, is marvellous and light, easy to cut and durable [...]. It is a stone, moreover, that is damaged only very little by cannons, as one can see in the walls of the harbour, hit by thousands and thousands of cannons in times of popular revolts.¹⁰

⁵ C. Celano, *Notitie del bello, dell'antico, e del curioso della città di Napoli, per i signori forastieri*, Napoli, Giacomo Raillard, 1692, 10 vols. A digital edition, published in 2010, is available at www.memofonte.it/ricerche/napoli.html#celano. Further references will be to this edition, though the page numbers will be those of the original, indicated between square brackets in the digital text. For Celano see R. Galvagno in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 23, 1979, s.v. 'Celano, Carlo'; G. Scognamiglio, 'Carlo Celano descrittore di Napoli', in: *Letteratura & arte*, 3 (2005), pp. 227–250; F. Strazzullo, 'Carlo Celano descrittore di Napoli sulla fine del '600', in: *Atti della Accademia Pontaniana*, n. ser., 44 (1995), pp. 39–63; B. Croce, 'Un descrittore di Napoli: Carlo Celano', in: idem, *Saggi sulla letteratura italiana del Seicento*, Bari, Laterza, 1911, pp. 361–376. For Celano's theatrical activities cfr. K. Vaopoulos, *Temi cervantini a Napoli: Carlo Celano e La zingaretta*, Firenze, Alinea, 2003.

⁶ For Fanzago, see Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. III., pp. 238–239; for Giordano, B. De Dominici, *Vita del Cavaliere D. Luca Giordano, pittore napoletano*, Napoli, Francesco Ricciardo, 1729, pp. 93, 95, 97. Celano relates that his father was good friends with the sculptor Girolamo Santacroce; cfr. Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. IX., 73.

⁷ J. Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone: Eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens*, ed. P. Ganz, in: idem, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 2, München and Basel, Beck/Schwabe, 2001, p. 165 'das prunkliebende Neapel'. Cfr. C. Tauber, 'Die Flucht ins Decorum: Jacob Burckhardts neapolitanische Kapitulation', in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 65 (2002), pp. 73–90.

⁸ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. I, p. 7 'Era la città fondata su l'alto del colle'. Cfr. G. Cantone, *Napoli barocca*, Roma/Bari, Laterza, 1992, chap. 1; C. De Seta, *Napoli*, Bari/Roma, Laterza, 1981.

⁹ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. I, p. 17 'Dal mare apparisce in forma d'un nobilissimo teatro'. Cfr. E. Bellucci, V. Valerio (eds), *Piante e vedute di Napoli dal 1600 al 1699: La città teatro*, Napoli, Electa, 2007.

¹⁰ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. I, pp. 19–20 'La pietra che poi ha Napoli per gli edifici è mirabile e leggera, facilissima a tagliarsi e durabile, ed in ogni posta di pietra s'alza un palmo di fabbrica. È una pietra, poi, in cui pochissima breccia fa il cannone, come si vede nelle muraglia della marina, tocche da migliaia e migliaia di cannonate in tempo de' tumulti popolari'.

The stone he speaks of is without a doubt the Neapolitan yellow *tufo* or tuff. Already Giorgio Vasari was struck by the manner in which it is worked, with a saw rather than a chisel. One seventeenth-century author, referring to Vasari, indicates that the stone masons, working their hatchets more like carpenters, prepared the blocks of tufo in such a manner that 'afterwards, in erecting the walls and curving the ceilings, they do not need to do more than to put them into place with some lime and sand, the building thus appearing to be born right there'.¹¹

Even more explicit about this point is Giulio Cesare Capaccio, author of the Neapolitan guidebook *Il Forastiero* (1634). Discussing what he calls 'the body of the city' in an early draft (1607-08) of the guidebook, he writes:

having a very light kind of stone, [and mortar of] the sand named *pozzolana* which is like that of Pozzuoli and makes constructions hard as iron, and the lime of the living stones [*pietre vive*] of Castellammare, of Vico, and of the surroundings, we can build towards the sky [*verso l'aria*], erecting buildings of up to five and six stories. This is a thing seen nowhere else in the world, and for this reason, even if in circumference it doesn't exceed some other cities, that cover an area that is a little bit larger, like Constantinople and Paris, it does exceed them in [number of] inhabitants, because of the high and dense manner of habitation.¹²

Leon Battista Alberti counts *tufo* among the stones that 'are born from itself [*pietre che da se nascono*]'.¹³ Vincenzo Scamozzi, who visited Naples in 1579 and again ten years later, is more extensive in his account:

Tuff stones are mostly formed in hills, and high places, and most of all where there are some underground heats in dry terrains, and without humidity of the earth, as around Rome, and at Pozzuoli, and all those hills around it through the heat of the underground sulphur mines, and of the bitumen, and likewise in the hills of Naples, and elsewhere, and because if this, this kind of stone is full of spirit [*humore*], and of substance, and very light and porous.¹⁴

¹¹ D. Regi, *Memorie storiche del venerabile P. Camillo De Lellis, e de' suoi Chierici regolari ministri degl'infermi*, Napoli, Giacinto Passaro, 1676, p. 153 '[il Tufo è] ubbidiente talmente al taglio del ferro, che parlando di tal material atta à gl' Edificij, in vece di matoni, hebbe à dire Giorgio Vasari, dove tratta dell' Architettura; che in Napoli i Muratori, à guisa di Legnaiuoli, adoprando l' accetta, cavano così ben agiustato il tufo che poi non gli resta altro che fare, nell'ergere i muri, ò piegar le volte, che ponendolo al posto, con aggiungere poco calcina, e sabbione, trovarsi come nata la fabrica'. Cfr. G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. Bettarini, P. Barocchi, Firenze, Sansoni/S.P.E.S., 1966, vol. 6, p. 384.

¹² Capaccio in B. Capasso, 'Napoli descritta ne' principii del secolo XVII da Giulio Cesare Capaccio', in: *Archivio storico per le Province Napoletane*, 7 (1882), pp. 85-86 'havendo noi la pietra leggerissima, l'arena, detta pozzulana a somiglianza di quella di Pozzuolo, che fa le fabriche forti come ferro, et la calce delle pietre vive di Castel a mare, di Vico, et del contorno, possiamo fabricare in modo verso l'aria, che si alzano gli edificij insino al quinto et sesto solaro, cosa ch'in nessuna parte del mondo si vede, che perciò anco Napoli, se non supera di circuito l'altre città, ch'hanno a pena gli primi tavolati, come Costantinopoli e Parigi, le supera però di popolo, per il ristretto e folto modo di habitare'. Cfr. G.C. Capaccio, *Il Forastiero*, Napoli, Gio. Domenico Roncagliolo, 1634, p. 850. For a discussion of the building materials and techniques in the period under consideration see M. Russo, 'Magisteri murari 'a cantieri' nell'età del viceregno spagnolo', in: *Murature tradizionali napoletane: Cronologia dei paramenti tra il XVI ed il XIX secolo*, ed. G. Fiengo, L. Guerriero, Napoli, Arte Tipografica, 1999, pp. 71-151.

¹³ L.B. Alberti, *I dieci libri de l'architettura*, Vinegia, Vincenzo Vaugris, 1546, p. 40 [margin] 'Pietre che da se nascono'.

¹⁴ V. Scamozzi, *L'idea della architettura universale*, Venetia, Vincenzo Scamozzi, 1615, p. 211 'I tufi per lo più si generano ne' colli, e luoghi rilevati, e massimamente dove sono alcuni ardori sotterranei ne' terreni asciutti, e privi d'humidità della terra, come intorno à Roma, & à Pozzuolo, & tutti que; colli là d'intorno per gli ardori delle minere sotterranee del solfo, e del Bitume, e parimente ne' monti di Napoli, & altrove, e perciò questa specie di pietra, e piena d'humore, e di sostanza, e molto leggiera, e porosa'.

Somewhat later he adds that the stone is 'very light, and easy to cut from all sides, and truly useful for making walls, as it is sponge-like, dry and sandy'.¹⁵

If 'the hills of Naples' might be a somewhat vague description of the place where this stone is quarried, other sources confirm that the stone was cut directly from under the city. Celano, for one, relates that in Castel Sant'Elmo 'there is a cistern from which all the stones for the construction of the castle have been quarried'.¹⁶ And elsewhere: 'we have grottoes in Naples where the stones for building are quarried, [...] and among them there is one under the Ministry of Providence, where one could hide an army, [as large], so to speak, [as that] of Xerxes'.¹⁷ These caves were not without danger, and fear for parts of the city collapsing lead to attempts to regulation already at the end of the seventeenth century – apparently with little success.¹⁸

Naples rises from its own soil, a soil, moreover, that is deeply anchored in the geological context. Indeed, Celano's interest in more geological aspects pops up not infrequently, such as when he discusses his exploration of the river that, he argues, should run under the city. Lowering himself in a well, he finds that there is a slight breeze; a paper boat is carried away on the current of the water; at different points in the city, the water is of a similar quality, weight and taste – all these findings add up to his conclusion that, 'if one could provide this waters with convenient bed, it would form a *perennissimo* river'.¹⁹ The city itself, then, with its underground caves and rivers, is porous as the stone it is made of.²⁰

The Plurality of Matter

And yet, this monolithic-but-porous image of the city drastically changes when we start out on the first of ten *giornate*, the day-long itineraries through the city that make up the ten books of the *Notitie*. Even if the yellow *tufo* dominates, Celano, we soon find out, has a preference for the exotic. The first *giornata* is largely devoted to a visit to the cathedral. Celano begins with sketching its position within the fabric of the city, situating it relative to the main streets and squares, but also relative to the history of the site. 'In this square', he writes, 'stood, from the time of the Greeks, a most famous temple, dedicated to Apollo, the remains of which can still be found, and also by me have been observed'.²¹ Excavations for the monument to Cardinal Caracciolo laid bare, some sixteen *palmi* below the ground, a 'most beautiful ancient floor, worked throughout, almost as a mosaic, with tiny stones of coloured and white

¹⁵ Cit., p. 212 'sono tutti leggerissimi, e facili al tagliarli per ogni verso, & in vero riescono molto à proposito al far le mura, essendochè essi sono spongiosi, aspri, & arenosi'.

¹⁶ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. VI, p. 49 'vi è una cisterna dalla quale sono state cavate tutte le pietre ch'han servito per la fabrica del castello'.

¹⁷ Cit., giorn. IX., p. 46 'habiamo grotte in Napoli dove sono cavate pietre per fabricare, [...], e fra questa ve ne è una sotto il monistero della Provvidenza, che asconder vi si potrebbe un esercito, per così dire, di Serse'. Cfr. *Il sottosuolo di Napoli: Relazione della commissione di studio*, Napoli, Comune di Napoli, 1967.

¹⁸ Cfr. F. Strazzullo, 'La corporazione napoletana dei fabbricatori, pipernieri e tagliamonti', in: *Palladio*, 1-3 (1964), pp. 28-58, esp. 36-37.

¹⁹ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. IV, 150 ff., part. p. 153 'E chi bene osserva tutte quest'acque haverà certo da dire che, se darse gli potesse comodo letto, formerebbero un perennissimo fiume'.

²⁰ For the concept of porosity, see I. Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham/NC: Duke University Press, 2008), ch. 4; idem, *Culture after Humanism*, London: Routledge 2001, p. 129; W. Benjamin, A. Lacis, 'Neapel [1925]', in: W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. T. Rexroth, Frankfurt/M, Suhrkamp, 1972, vol. IV - 1/2, pp. 307-316 and, in response to the latter, E. Bloch, 'Italien und die Porosität [1925]', in: *Literarische Aufsätze*, Frankfurt/M, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965, pp. 508-515.

²¹ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. I, p. 71 'In questo largo stava edificato un famoso tempio fin da' tempi de' greci dedicato ad Apollo, come se ne vedono le vestigia, e da me anco sono state osservate'.

marble'.²² Likewise, the works for the monument to archbishop Pignatelli revealed, after cutting through the *astrico* of the 'new church' and the floor of tiles of the late Roman church of Santa Restituta, a 'floor of *cipollazzo* and white marble'.²³ About the reconstructions of the church after the earthquake of 1456 he writes that the arches are 'all of the hardest travertine, with granite columns, and the walls are made in reticulated work'.²⁴ Through Celano's layered description of the site, rather than a history of forms or spaces, we are lead through a history of materials.

A similar picture arises when we continue into the church through the main entrance, described by Celano as a *machina*, and flanked by two columns of porphyry, which, as he notes, 'belonged to the ancient temple'.²⁵ On entering, the first thing that should strike the visitor, is the 110 ancient columns, on the pilasters, the chapels, and so forth, all in 'granite of Egypt, of Africa and other kinds of *pietre mischie* that could have only come to Italy in the times of the Greeks and Romans'.²⁶ Taking the visitor from chapel to chapel, he points out the fine marbles, elegant decorations and precious objects. In the chapel of the Galeota family, for example, the gilded stucco and precious marbles are praised, as well as the 'tabernacle and altar frontal rich with many precious stones'.²⁷ The sacristy too holds a wealth of materials. A relic of the Holy cross kept in a 'cross of gilded silver, with many precious stones set in gold and very ancient enamel works', while other relics are kept in silver statues.²⁸ One of the numerous silver statues, a bust of Santa Candida, holds the cane of Saint Peter, 'of which it is not known, nor has it been possible to find out, what wood it is made of, as it is not found in these parts'. 'The support', Celano continues, 'is of ivory'.²⁹ Leaving the sacristy, close to the small exit, is a 'vase of *cotognino* alabaster, shaped like a basin [*pila*] that is used for the holy water'. 'This', he adds, 'some ancient sources suggest, was an ancient Hebrew hydra, in which they served wine at marriages, and truly it is worthy to be seen'.³⁰ The baptismal font, Celano points out, is of a rare Egyptian basalt and can be traced back to Constantine.³¹

Leaving the cathedral through the *porta minore* and walking down 'the steps of *cepollazzo* marble' one arrives at the main street 'traditionally called of Sun and Moon'.³² Thus, we enter the urban space of streets and squares. 'Descending the stairs', Celano writes, 'on the right one sees the beginnings of a bell tower of hard

²² Cit., p. 71 'un bellissimo pavimento antico, tutto lavorato quasi a mosaico, di picciole pietre di marmi mischi e bianchi'.

²³ Cit., p. 73 'vi si trovò un pavimento di marmo cipollazzo e bianco'.

²⁴ Cit., p. 78 'sono tutti di durissimi travertini e di colonne di granito, e le mura sono tutte d'opera reticolata'.

²⁵ Cit., p. 79 'le due colonne di porfido erano dell'antico tempio'.

²⁶ Cit., pp. 79-80 'Entrati nella chiesa, per prima vi si veggono cento e dieci colonne antiche, osservandosene per ogni pilastro [80] tre: ne' maggiori dell'arco cinque, e nelle cappelle laterali della tribuna, et anche nella tribuna medesima, e nell'uscire dalle navi alla croce; e tutte sono di granito d'Egitto, d'Africano e d'altre sorti di pietre mischie che non vennero in Italia se non in tempo de' greci e de' romani'.

²⁷ Cit., p. 100 'abbellita et adornata, come si vede, di stucchi posti in oro, di dipinture e di pretiosi marmi, con una custodia e paliotto ricchi di molte pietre pretiose'.

²⁸ Cit., p. 107 'un pezzo del sacro legno della Croce, collocato in una croce d'argento dorato, con molte pietre pretiose legate in oro e smalti antichissimi'.

²⁹ Cit., p. 111 'non si sa, né si è potuto sapere, di che specie di legno egli sia, non essendovene in queste nostre parti. L'appoggiatojo è egli d'avorio'.

³⁰ Cit., p. 112 'Presso di questa picciola porta vi è un vaso d'alabastro cotognino, in forma di pila, che serve per l'acqua benedetta. Questo, per antica traditione d'alcuni, si ha che fusse un'antica idria degl'ebrei, dove nelle nozze serbavano il vino, e veramente ella è degna d'esser osservata'.

³¹ Cit., p. 129.

³² Cit., p. 152 'Da questa, per iscale di marmo cepollazzo [...], si cala alla strada maestra, anticamente detta di Sole e Luna'.

square stones'.³³ Also the campanile invites Celano to an archaeological digression, one that deserves to be quoted at length:

When starting to dig for the fundamentals of the said campanile, they found there a column of *cepollazzo* marble, $34\frac{1}{2}$ *palmi* long and 4 *palmi* in diameter, and there is not a thing more beautiful to be seen – not only, that is, in Naples, but in the whole of Italy. It has wave-like delineations of a soft green-grayish colour [*verdaccio*], just like the waves of the sea. The column was destined to be put up on a base where today is the *gulgia* [of San Gennaro] and to be dedicated to our glorious protector, and the city had it cleaned splendidly for this effect; but due to some disagreements between the city and cardinal Filamarino [1642–1666], it wasn't placed as planned but remained inside the church. Subsequently, cardinal Caracciolo [1667–1685], with the approval of Rome, donated it to Don Pietro d'Aragona [Pedro Antonio, 1666–1671], then viceroy, with the pretext of wanting to place on it a statue of the Immaculate. But this never happened, because the *signor* viceroy gave it to the Theatine fathers, who presently keep it near the small entrance of the church of San Paolo, on the side of San Lorenzo. On the site where it was found were also other columns of a similar kind of marble and of the same size, but they could not be excavated, because it would have been necessary to pull down the houses that were build on top of it.³⁴

Celano's anecdote gives us an indication of the appreciation for the raw material; in fact, we see that the unearthed column interrupts Celano's *giornata*, introducing flash forwards to other places in the city, to be visited on other days. Thus the material disrupts time and space. The spoils of antiquity become very much part of the fabric of the present city, though, at the same time, they stay linked to their histories.³⁵ These histories, are not, or not exclusively, as one might expect,

³³ Cit., p. 152 'Calando a man destra vedesi un principio di campanile di pietre dure quadrate'.

³⁴ Cit., p. 153–154 'Nel voler cavare per le fondamenta di detto campanile, vi si trovò una colonna di palmi 34 e mezzo e di diametro palmi 4 di marmo cepollazzo, che cosa più bella veder non si può, non dico in Napoli, ma per l'Italia. È ella ondata d'un color verdaccio, appunto come un'onda marina. Questa colonna era destinata per collocarsi sopra d'una base, dove hoggi è l'aguglia, e dedicarla al glorioso nostro protettore, e di già la città l'haveva fatta nobilmente ripulire; ma perché si passarono alcune differenze fra la città et il cardinal Filamarino, la colonna non fu collocata conforme il disegno, ma restò dentro della chiesa. Il cardinal Caracciolo, dipoi, con licenza di Roma la donò a don Pietro d'Aragona, all'ora viceré, sotto pretesto di volerla inalzare e collocarvi sù la statua dell'Immacolata Concettione; ma la cosa non fu così, perché il signor viceré la donò agli padri teatini, che al presente la conservano presso la porta picciola della chiesa di San Paolo, dalla parte di San Lorenzo. Nel luogo dove fu ritrovata ve n'erano dell'altre di marmo simile e d'eguale grandezza, ma cavar non si poterono, perché sarebbe stato di bisogno buttar giù le case che sopra edificate vi stavano'. Cfr. cit., p. 157; G. Gimma, *Della storia naturale delle gemme, delle pietre e di tutti minerali, ovvero della fisica sotterranea*, Napoli, Gennaro Muzio & Felice Mosca, 1730, vol. 2, p. 16.

³⁵ Much literature on the use of spolia focuses on antiquity or the Middle Ages. See however L. Bosman, 'Spolia and Coloured Marble in Sepulchral Monuments in Rome, Florence and Bosco Marengo: Designs by Dosio and Vasari', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 49 (2006), pp. 353–376; idem, *The Power of Tradition: Spolia in the Architecture of Saint-Peter's in the Vatican*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2004, pp. 57 ff.; M.F. Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation: Prolegomena to an Understanding of Spolia in Early Christian Rome*, Rome, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2003, pp. 278–293; D.A.R. Moore, 'Notes on the Use of Spolia in Roman Architecture from Bramante to Bernini', in *Architectural Studies in Memory of Richard Krautheimer*, ed. C.L. Striker, Mainz: Zabern, 1996, pp. 119–122. For some theoretical perspectives see R. Brilliant, D. Kinney (eds), *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*, Surrey and Burlington, Ashgate, 2012; L. Foulquier, 'La Métamorphose des pierres: Les remplois, entre rebut et souvenir', in: *Histoire de l'art et anthropologie*, 2009, at <http://actesbranly.revues.org/252> (1 April 2013); D. Kinney, 'Rape or Restitution of the Past? Interpreting Spolia', in: *The Art of Interpreting*, ed. S.C. Scott, University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, pp. 52–67; S. Settis, 'Continuità, distanza, conoscenza: tre usi dell'antico', in: *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, ed. S. Settis, Torino, Einaudi, 1986, vol. 3, pp. 373–486.

anchored in their form, but rather in the very matter itself.³⁶

Architecture, Archaeology, and Collecting

The greenish, wave-like delineations of the column found at the site of the campanile, likened by Celano to the waves of the sea, hint at another aspect of the material richness he describes. As has been shown by Fabio Barry, there is an ekphrastic tradition that engages precisely with this pictorial quality of stones, a tradition, moreover, that is strongly linked to ideas about the material essence of marble.³⁷ Aristotle, among others, 'had taught that marbles were deposits of purified earthy matter suspended in water that percolated down through the earth's crust to deep reservoirs, where the whole brew was frozen or fired solid by earthly humors'.³⁸ Now Aristotle was widely read in the seventeenth century, but his ideas about the origins of stone were no longer the only ones around. The abbot Giacinto Gimma of Bari, who in his *Storia naturale*, published at Naples in 1730, gives an extensive critical overview of the then available theories, mentions it briefly and then discards it.³⁹ Although it may be doubtful, then, that this particular association played a role in the appreciation of this particular column, a more general interest in the generative and formative powers of nature was widespread. In fact, Neapolitan scientists and philosophers complemented Galileo's and, a bit later, Descartes' lessons with a vitalistic understanding of matter, thus suggesting the continuing influence of local thinkers Giordano Bruno and Giambattista della Porta – but also, the profound impact of the Vesuvius and the volcanic activity at the Campi Flegrei.⁴⁰

Debates about the origins of matter were, particularly with the onset of a more experimental culture around 1600, grounded in the direct engagement with physical objects, often brought together in so-called *Wunderkammern*. In Naples, the collection of Ferrante Imperato had been an important point of reference for scientists working at the turn of the century.⁴¹ Celano writes how his 'more than copious museum [...] called out to foreigners of the most remote provinces to come and visit', adding that 'there was not a moment in which it was not filled with curious and aspiring men, gathered to learn'.⁴² By the time that he was writing, however, Imperato's collection was long dispersed, as was that of the apothecary Maurizio Di Gregorio, described in his *Idea per fare le gallerie universali* of 1625 and

³⁶ For further ideas about such anachronisms, though primarily focussed on form, see A. Nagel, Chr. S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York, Zone Books, 2010 and A. Nagel, Chr. S. Wood, 'Toward a New Model of Renaissance Anachronism', *The Art Bulletin*, 87 (2005), pp. 403-415.

³⁷ F. Barry, 'Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages', in: *The Art Bulletin*, 89 (2007), pp. 627-656.

³⁸ Cit., p. 630.

³⁹ Gimma, *Della storia naturale*, cit., vol. 1, p. 59 (cap. 8, art. 1.3).

⁴⁰ B. De Giovanni, 'La vita intellettuale a Napoli fra la metà del '600 e la restaurazione del Regno', in: *Storia di Napoli*, Napoli, Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1967, vol. 6.1, pp. 401-534, esp. 413; N. Badaloni, *Introduzione a Giovan Battista Vico*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1961, pp. 9-164. Cfr. S. Cocco, 'Locating the Natural Sciences in Early Modern Naples', in: *A Companion to Early Modern Naples*, ed. Tommaso Astarita, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2013, pp. 453-475; M. Torrini, 'Galileo a Napoli', in: *Galileo e la scuola galileiana nelle università del Seicento*, ed. L. Pepe, Bologna, CLUEB, 2011, pp. 373-380; F. Lomonaco, M. Torrini (eds), *Galileo e Napoli*, Napoli, Guida, 1987 and M. Agrimi, 'Descartes nella Napoli di fine Seicento', in: *Descartes: Il metodo e i saggi*, ed. G. Belgioioso e.a., Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1990, vol. 2, pp. 545-586.

⁴¹ E. Stendardo, *Ferrante Imperato. Collezionismo e studio della natura a Napoli tra Cinque e Seicento*, Napoli, Accademia Pontaniana, 2001.

⁴² Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. III, pp. 34-35 'Questo grand'huomo in questa casa formò un copiosissimo museo, che chiamava da provincie remotissime i curiosi forestieri a vederlo, né vi era tempo nel quale popolato non fusse da curiosi e desiderosi insieme d'imparare'.

1642.⁴³ The role of these earlier collections was now taken up by that of the Neapolitan architect Francesco Antonio Picchiatti (1617–1694), described in detail by Celano.⁴⁴ Authors who have tried to relate this collection to the architect's works have focused primarily on the antiquities.⁴⁵ This aspect of the collection seems indeed significant, and it may in fact be argued that Picchiatti's archaeological interest echoes that of Celano, or better, that of Celano echoes Picchiatti's.⁴⁶

Another aspect of the collection, however, suggests a more specific interest in the qualities of the materials he, as an architect, worked with. Among the medals, coins, gems, and antiquities, there were, according to Celano's description:

certain cases [containing] a quantity of worked stones and jewels in different forms and colours, such as jasper, chalcedony, heliotrope, agate, cornelian, plasma and kidney stones. There are some that naturally show trees, birds, and other animals, as if painted with a brush. [...] there are large pieces of amber, with leaves, ants and other materials in it.⁴⁷

And somewhat further on:

One sees a variety of extravagant things of nature, such as fruits, the teeth of animals, horns of the unicorn, the rhinoceros, and others, many petrified pieces of fruit and plants, thunderstones, and more.⁴⁸

Such objects were indeed common to *Kunstkammern* all over Europe, though in this specific case, it is interesting to look further at the implications of the collector's occupation as architect.

At a time when architects were still very much concerned with the materials themselves, their knowledge was direct, and appreciated as such by scientists and others.⁴⁹ The Venetian architect Vincenzo Scamozzi (1548–1616), who deals extensively with the materials of the architect in his *Idea della architettura universale*, wrote that 'one cannot gain certain knowledge of them [i.e., stones], but

⁴³ M. Di Gregorio, 'Le coselline di un ometto curioso'. *L'idea per fare le gallerie universali di tutte le cose del mondo, naturali, artificiali e miste*, ed. D. Caracciolo, G. de Miranda, Galatina, Congedo, 2008, with further references at pp. 23–25; I.M. Iasiello, *Il Collezionismo di antichità nella Napoli dei viceré*, Napoli, Liguori, 2003, pp. 53–64.

⁴⁴ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. V, pp. 91–98. Cfr. A. Gambardella (ed.), *Le Opere di Francesco Antonio Picchiatti nelle chiese di Napoli*, Napoli, Luciano, 2004, pp. 119–124; Iasiello, *Il Collezionismo di antichità*, cit., pp. 188–196. See Gambardella, *Le opere di Francesco Antonio Picchiatti*, cit., p. 21 for the place and date of birth (Naples, 1617) and cit., p. 26 for his date of death (1694).

⁴⁵ Gambardella, *Le opere*, cit., p. 121; Vincenzo Rizzo, 'La Cultura dell'antico e lo spirito berniniano-borrominiano in Vaccaro. Raffronti e concomitanze con la produzione coeva', in: *Domenico Antonio Vaccaro: Sintesi delle arti*, ed. B. Gravagnuolo, F. Adriani, Napoli, Guida, 2005, pp. 65–66 (suggesting that Picchiatti's collection was important for Lorenzo Vaccaro and his son Domenico Antonio).

⁴⁶ For this archaeological interest see Cantone, *Napoli barocca*, cit., pp. 150–152. Cfr. Adriano Scultore's dedication addressed to Picchiatti in G. Mormile, *Descrizione della città di Napoli e del suo amenissimo distretto, e dell'antichità della città di Pozzuolo*, 3rd ed., Napoli, Francesco Paci, 1670.

⁴⁷ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. V, pp. 95–96 'Vi sono certe cassette, una quantità di pietre e gioie lavorate con diverse forme e colori, come de' diaspri, calcedonii, elitropie, agate, corniole, plasme e pietre enefritiche. Ve ne sono alcune che naturalmente fan vedere alberi, uccelli ed altre figure, come fatti dal pennello. [...] vi sono pezzi grandi d'ambra, con foglie, con formiche ed altre materie dentro'.

⁴⁸ Cit., p. 97 'Vi si veggono diverse cose naturali, stravaganti, come de' frutta, de' denti d'animali, ossi d'unicorni, de' rinoceronti ed altri, molte frutta ed herbe impietrite, pietre ceraunie ed alter'. For the thunderstones or 'ceraunie', see M.R. Goodrum, 'Questioning Thunderstones and Arrowheads: The Problem of Recognizing and Interpreting Stone Artifacts in the Seventeenth Century', in: *Early Science and Medicine*, 13 (2008), pp. 482–508.

⁴⁹ For this point, though focused on a different context, P.H. Smith, 'Art, Science, and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe', in: *Isis*, 97 (2006), pp. 83–100; idem, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004.

by working them with the chisel'.⁵⁰ He sees this knowledge as multi-sensory, where touch and even smell all contribute to gaining knowledge of the architect's materials. It is no surprise then, that artisans, including architects, were considered experts on the materials they worked with, and, in fact, on one occasion Celano mentions Cosimo Fanzago (1591–1678) in this capacity. Discussing a pair of columns generally considered to be of jasper – we will return to them below – he writes: 'Cavalier Cosimo has pointed out to me several times, that it is not jasper, but another stone, unequalled and more precious than anything he has seen in Italy'.⁵¹

Picchiatti's collection, then, not only echoes Celano's fascination with raw materials, but adds a further significance by implying a more scientific interest too. Indeed, the kind of petrified objects noted by Celano in the collection played a central role in debates about geological processes of formation, as did those stones showing images 'as if painted with a brush'.⁵² Returning to the city as a whole, we now realize that every material singled out by Celano has yet another history, one that stands outside the interventions of man, and is properly called a natural history. Significantly, the aforementioned abbot Giacinto Gimma refers his readers frequently to the work of Celano, inviting them to seek out in the city the materials he discusses from a scientific perspective.⁵³

Stucco Takes Over

Celano's profound interest in the materials that make up the fabric of the city of Naples seems to be very much at odds with conceptions of the baroque as immaterial, that is, as an art, or even a culture of appearances.⁵⁴ It is this idea of the baroque that has lead French philosopher Jean Baudrillard to associate it with the material of stucco. He finds in the 'prowesses of stucco and baroque art' the urge towards 'a transubstantiation of all of nature into a unique substance'.⁵⁵

In the churches and palaces stucco is wed to all forms, imitates everything – velvet curtains, wooden cornices, charnel swelling of the flesh. Stucco exorcizes the unlikely confusion of matter into a single new substance, a sort of general equivalent of all the others, and is prestigious theatrically because is itself a representative substance, a mirror of all the others.⁵⁶

Notwithstanding Celano's interest in 'the unlikely confusion of matter', at the time that he was writing, the predominance of stucco was rapidly becoming a fact.⁵⁷ Particularly in the wake of the great earthquake of 1688, a time in which, or so Celano writes, architects 'did more damage than the earthquake itself', quick

⁵⁰ V. Scamozzi, *L'idea della architettura universale*, Venetia, Vincenzo Scamozzi, 1615, vol. 2, p. 194 (cap. 7) 'ne si puo far certo giudicio di esse se non toccandole col scalpello'. Cfr. A. Payne, 'Materiality, Crafting, and Scale in Renaissance Architecture', *Oxford Art Journal*, 32 (2009), pp. 365–386, here, fn. 75 and, more generally, W. Oechslin, '“L'idea della architettura universale”: Vincenzo Scamozzi's Grundlegung einer Theorie der Architektur', in: *RIHA Journal*, 60 (2012): <http://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2012/2012-oct-dec/special-issue-scamozzi/oechslin-lidea-della-architettura-universale> (11 November 2013).

⁵¹ See *infra*, n. 62.

⁵² Cfr. J. van Gastel, 'Geology and Imagery in the Kingdom of Naples: A Letter on the Origins of Alabaster (1696)', in: *Kritische Berichte*, 40 (2012), pp. 64–77.

⁵³ See e.g., Gimma, *Della storia naturale*, cit., vol. 1, pp. 265, p. 418, and vol. 2, pp. 12, 14, 16, 19, 23.

⁵⁴ For classic instances of this point see J.A. Maravall, *La cultura del barroco: Análisis de una estructura histórica*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1975, pp. 390 ff.; H. Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst*, München, Bruckmann, 1917, pp. 244–246.

⁵⁵ J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. P. Foss e.a., New York, Semiotext[e], 1983, p. 87.

⁵⁶ Cit., p. 88.

⁵⁷ R. Lattuada, *Il Barocco a Napoli e in Campania*, Napoli, Società editrice napoletana, 1988, p. 35.

reconstructions were executed in stucco.⁵⁸ Now, Celano had nothing against stucco *an sich*. In fact, he is full of praise about the stucco decorations and gildings executed in the cathedral under archbishops Decio Carafa (in function 1613–1626) and Innico Caracciolo (in function 1667–1685).⁵⁹

Yet, Celano shows to be very much concerned with what lies behind. ‘The columns of the pilasters’, he writes about the cathedral, ‘today are encrusted with stucco, and at some places they are covered from the bases upwards, also with stucco; and one could see (when the bases and capitals were uncovered) that they were of white Greek marble’.⁶⁰ Elsewhere, Celano indicates that he is not in favour of the use of stucco to cover marble, even if it is used to ‘modernize’ gothic architecture; ‘often’, he writes, ‘marbles are plastered over that merited every possible effort to be kept the way they were’.⁶¹ One such occasion that appears to have disturbed him particularly concerns the no longer existent church of San Gennarello:

This church has three naves constructed in the gothic manner, and there are two columns besides the main altar, of about 18 *palmi* high, that are generally considered to be of the finest jasper. But Cavalier Cosimo [Fanzago] has pointed out to me several times, that it is not jasper, but another stone, unequalled and more precious than anything he has seen in Italy, and [he was of the opinion that] one should call them the two famous gems of Naples. [The members of the Congregatione de’ Settantadue Preti] wanted to restore and modernize [the church], and for that occasion they have had all the columns smirched with white, including those two that are so admirable.⁶²

It is not only the ‘smirching’ of precious materials that Celano bewails, but his interest extends into the field of what we would consider as more ephemeral decorations as well. Stucco also takes the place of the rich drapes that apparently decorated the whole interior of the church of San Domenico:

in this church one could see a striking quantity of the richest velvet drapes and of equally precious drapes of gold and brocade *ricci sopra ricci*, that in the middle aisle were hung in three orders per part, and two in the side aisles, and in addition there were those that decorated the crossing, so that the whole church was decked out with drapes. Today, due to

⁵⁸ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. III, p. 107. A central figure in these restaurations was the architect Arcangelo Guglielmelli; cfr. G. Amirante, *Architettura napoletana tra Seicento e Settecento: L’opera di Arcangelo Guglielmelli*, Napoli, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1990.

⁵⁹ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. I, pp. 81–82.

⁶⁰ Cit., p. 80 ‘Le colonne degli pilastri stanno hoggi incrostate di stucco, e coverte in qualche parte dalle basi, similmente di stucco; si osservavano (quando stavano scoperte le basi ed i capitelli) di marmo bianco Greco’.

⁶¹ Cit., giorn. II, p. 118 ‘È stata poscia modernata al possibile con istucchi, quali a dire il vero sono le ruine della venerabile antichità, perché molte volte impiastrano marmi che meriterebbero ogni attenzione per mantenerli tali quali sono’. Cfr. V. Russo, ‘Architettura nelle preesistenze tra controriforma e barocco. ‘Istruzioni’, progetti e cantieri nei contesti di Napoli e Roma’, in: *Verso una storia del restauro: Dall’età classica al primo Ottocento*, ed. S. Casiello, Firenze, Alinea, 2008, pp. 139–206, 167; F. Lenzo, ‘Architettura di marmi: Vaccaro e Solimena in San Paolo Maggiore’, in: *Domenico Antonio Vaccaro: Sintesi delle arti*, ed. B. Gravagnuolo, F. Adriani, Napoli, Guida, 2005, pp. 270–272.

⁶² Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. III, pp. 238–239 ‘Questa chiesa è a tre navi di struttura gotica, e vi sono due colonne presso l’altare maggiore di 18 palmi in circa, che comunemente vanno stimate di finissimo diaspro, ma dal cavalier Cosimo più volte mi fu detto che diaspro non era, ma una pietra che simile e più pretiosa veduta non haveva in tutta Italia, e che queste si potevano chiamare due famose gemme di Napoli. In questa chiesa, che è antichissima parrocchia collegiata, vi sta posta la Congregatione de’ Settantadue Preti sotto la tutela del glorioso arcangelo san Michele, dal quale prende il titolo. Questi buoni preti l’han voluta ristaurare e ridurla alla moderna con istucchi e dipinture, e con questa occasione han fatto impiastrar di bianco tutte le colonne, e particolarmente queste due così ammirabili’.

the stucco decorations, almost all of them have been removed, and the pilasters are adorned with modern embroidered hangings and gold cloth, and the side aisles are decorated with only a few of the most expensive drapes.⁶³

After the modern 're-gothification' of the interior of San Domenico, little can be gathered from either the rich drapes or the stucco decorations. It is clear however, that he prefers these drapes to stucco, and indeed, at the outset of his book he gives extensive praise to the Neapolitan artisans making these precious fabrics.⁶⁴ Celano's description, moreover, should make us aware of the value attached to these ephemeral decorations, which, being widely present in Neapolitan churches,⁶⁵ seem to be directly linked to the rich marble incrustations that are so characteristic for Naples. As Celano indicates, these were first employed by Fanzago at the church of San Marino, where the artist worked close with the French embroider Nicolas de La Fage (d. 1655).⁶⁶ And indeed, on one occasion, we read that the three altars of the church of San Giuseppe delle Scalze, designed by Cosimo Fanzago, 'were adorned by a Scilian marble, which is of a tawny colour, like the habit of Saint Teresa'⁶⁷ Finally we find that even the more basic *piperno* is preferred by Celano. '[I]t has a beautiful façade of our travertine of piperno', he writes about the same church, 'but now it has been washed white with stucco'.⁶⁸

* * *

Apparently prompted to write his book by overhearing a group of French tourists complain that there was nothing more to see in Naples than that which nature has provided, the author addresses himself to the *signiori forastieri*, the foreigners who visit the city of Naples.⁶⁹ Celano provides them with an account of the city in which the materials do not, in the first place, tell something about the money that patrons are willing to spend – although he does not fail to mention this as well – but rather about the rich history of the city itself. His account is not only about the city that is, but also the city that was Naples. If a concise history of the city is given in the introductory pages, the material traces of this history run as a red thread through the whole of the work. This history is both, as we have seen, a social history and a natural history. It is the materials that make present the memories of the Greek and Roman origins of the city. At the same time, Naples is anchored in its geological context; significantly, Celano speaks of *our* travertine of piperno. A more profound knowledge of this natural history is shaped by a direct engagement with the materials as they took place in the oft-praised *Kunstkammern*, but also in the

⁶³ Cit., p. 115 'in questa chiesa vi si vedeva una quantità maravigliosa di ricchissime coltre di velluti e di ricchissimi drappi d'oro e de broccati ricci sopraricci, che nella nave di mezzo se ne ponevano tre ordini per parte e due nelle navi minori, oltre quelle che adornavano la croce, in modo che tutta la chiesa veniva adobbata di coltre. Hoggi, coll'occasione de' stucchi, sono state tolte via quasi tutte, et i pilastri s'adornano con cortine di ricamo alla moderna e tele d'oro, e solo dalle coltre, le più ricche, vengono adornate le navi minori'.

⁶⁴ Cit., giorn. I., p. 24.

⁶⁵ Cfr. e.g., ivi, giorn. I, p. 82; giorn. II, pp. 88, 176; giorn. III, p. 261; giorn. VII, p. 37; giorn. X, p. 94.

⁶⁶ J.N. Napoli, 'Artists, Patrons, and Trust in Seventeenth-Century Naples: The Case of the Certosa di San Martino', in: *California Italian Studies*, 3 (2012), p. 6; T. Fittipaldi, 'Serigrafie, ricami, collages, a Napoli, dal secolo XVII al secolo XIX', in: *Arte cristiana*, n.s. 71 (1983), pp. 327-362.

⁶⁷ Celano, *Notitie*, cit., giorn. VI, p. 74 'ha tre altari, quali vengono adornati da un marmo di Scilia che ha del leonato, come l'habito di santa Teresa'.

⁶⁸ Cit., p. 74 'vi è una bellissima facciata de' nostri travertini di piperno, ma hora sta inbiancata di stucco'.

⁶⁹ Cit., giorn. I, p. a6quaterv 'Veramente in Napoli non vi è che ammirare, se non quelle cose che la natura l'ha prodigamente concesse in dono' and p. 1. Cfr. Scognamiglio, 'Carlo Celano', cit., p. 227.

artisan's workshop, contexts where, implicitly, also Celano is part of. The city of Naples, we may paraphrase Calvino, does not speak its past – it contains it, written in the richness of its materials. It is here that Celano has found the city's past and present, giving it a voice that speaks beyond the surface.

Keywords

Carlo Celano, Naples, guidebooks, history of materiality, stucco

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RIASSUNTO

La Napoli di Carlo Celano (1692): itinerari in una città materiale

Il saggio propone una rilettura della nota guida di Napoli pubblicata nel 1692 da Carlo Celano, le *Notitie del bello, dell'antico e del curioso della città di Napoli*, ma con particolare attenzione per l'interesse continuo ivi dimostrato per la dimensione materiale della città. Soffermendosi sistematicamente sulla qualità della pietra utilizzata in molti edifici napoletani, Celano offre nella sua guida un'illustrazione dettagliata ed esperta della notevole varietà e ricchezza di materiali edili, che nella realtà napoletana del Seicento contraddistingue non solo il panorama urbano ma anche la stessa identità cittadina. La documentazione contenuta nel libro di Celano illustra pertanto un fenomeno caratteristico per l'urbanistica napoletana, e in un momento che precede di poco la sua distruzione, in seguito all'introduzione di stucco come materiale adatto per coprire quasi tutte le superfici, anche quelle in pietre solo recentemente elogiate per la loro propria qualità estetica.